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# Interview with Imam Kamalud-din (Part C)

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

**Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din:** ImamMuhammad, he is the leader of the American Muslim Mission, the largest Muslim community to our program American Muslim Mission in Focus. We would like to thank you very much for taking time out from your busy schedule to come and be with us. We know that you are traveling all over the country fulfilling obligations to speak at colleges and universities, and leadership conferences, and other organizations. We want to thank you very much for coming to be with us.

**Imam Muhammad:** Thank you, ImamKamalud-Din, for having me.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Yes, sir. Also, we have two other guests with us. The first guest I would like to present to you is Imam Arthur Farahkhan; he is the regional representative of the American Muslim Mission in the southwest. His home is Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is also the Resident Imam and he is the director in Oklahoma.

**Imam Arthur Farahkhan:** Thank you very much.

**Imam Yahya Abdullah:** Thank you.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Brother Imam, I'd like to begin with a question of you. Our time is short so we want to take advantage of you being with us here to get some information from you. We are always speaking of the moral foundation of a human life. In your teaching have really made us realize the importance of human development. We also understand that the woman’s role in society is very important. She is the first human teacher of the human being. The baby is affected even when it is in her womb by what she thinks, what she eats, what she feels and et cetera. I would like, if you will, to speak to that a moment and carry down-

**Imam Muhammad:** Environment is most important; as you just addressed the natural environment that we live in before we are even free in the world. We live in an environment of the mother's body. G’d has designed that to give us what we need there and prepare us and complete our development inside the womb so that we will be able to function out here. You are hardly ever to come out with the nose closed up---the nose is open so you can breathe. Everything is in nice order so we can function, but look what we had to go through to be prepared.

We had to be nine months in confinement in a nice environment that G’d designed to form us as we should be formed. When we come out in the outer environment, the first in environment we come into is the environment of the home, environment of mother, environment of the home, environment that mother prepares that she watches over. The moral problem comes when the sensitivities are disrupted, or changed, or are corrupted.

We belong to our mothers as children and most mothers they have the natural mother sentiments. The mother says “This is my child; I'm going to take good care of this child." The mother wants to see you have a good life. She is not just going to dress you well with clothes. She is going to dress you well with proper behavior. She is going to try to dress you in proper behavior, too, because she knows that is important to your life, to your future. If you don't have the proper behavior, the environment is going to be destroyed. She cares about everyone in the house. She cares about you. You are one of the children. She cares about all the children.

She does not want you coming up with bad morals and you will be hurting your brothers and sisters. She protects her little social order there, her family order, social order, she protects that. When we come out in the world, we have to live in close quarters with other people. We have to realize that we have to have that same family interest in the family of man if we're going to live in close quarters. You cannot have it without moral sensitivity.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:**  Brother Imam, listening to you I can see what to a city state and national government, because actually the respect for governments as a home and if it is fails, there is no way-- really is to go back to the home environment to get in there.

**Imam Muhammad:** Yes indeed.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** I'd like to go to Imam Farahkhan. I know he must have a lot of questions for you in his statements he'd like to make.

**Imam Farahkhan:** I'm with that but the fastest-growing religion on the face of the earth today, what is it about this religion? What is it about the basics that are turning people home?

**Imam Muhammad:** First, let's look at why it is growing fast. It is growing fast among the masses of Blacks in America. It is growing fast in Africa and the third world countries. Countries with third world developmental problems, it is growing fast there. We do not think of religion as being something that has appealed to people who need industrialization. They need industrialization but they also need to find those important bases to life. Our religion must provide a clear focus on the basic needs of man as a social creature, as a spiritual creature.

That is why it is growing fast. It is growing fast in Japan now. It is because Japanese have experienced a new wave of blackout in the mind, in the city of Tokyo and et cetera, the fast life, the nightlife. So they have experienced a lot of problems and gotten away from their old traditions. And they are looking at the religion now of Al-Islam which does not just offer a cultural mold for you to fit yourself into, but it puts importance on the understanding of the need for that cultural mode and its requirements, it will demand some kind of cultural mode for his life. It is a pity that America has to seasonally go so far away from her cultural mode. That is the Christian cultural mode.

We are seeing that growth and that appeal from Al-Islam simply because the masses and many people in highly industrialized countries like America and Japan got their (mental) lights knocked out. They are looking at Al-Islam not because Al-Islam is popular. I think it is popular because Saudi Arabia is in focus---the Middle East problems, the Saudi Arabia's in focus, Egypt has been put in focus so the Islamic world, the Islamic nations have been put in focus and I think that has a lot to do with this curiosity, too.

**Imam Farahkhan:** Thank you very much.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Brother Imam, we speak of Al-Islam but I imagine many people do not understand what we're talking about because it is Arabic. Would you please just tell us briefly what Al-Islam means?

**Imam Muhammad:** If I would say "Izlam," I'm sure a lot of middle-aged people and older people they would know what I'm talking about. If I say "Izlam," but that's incorrect that is not the correct pronunciation. The correct pronunciation is Islam not IZ but IS, IS-lam and that word has been popularized by translators of the Quran, translators of the religious teachings. But actually, when you look in the in the Quran you'll never find the religion proper being called Islam. It is always called "Al- Islam" we like to be known for doing something or to be known for being the first.

We are the first people to insist upon the pronunciation of the Qur’aanic pronunciation of our religion. It is commonly called Islam. We insist upon calling it Al-Islam as it is given in the Qur’aan, in the holy book.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** I have heard you teach many times that when you say "*salaam*" like *As-salaam* is an attribute you see from G’d. Of course, we know *salaam* is a peace that you can receive from creation indirectly from G’d through creation from each other. If we are hungry and we-

**Imam Muhammad:** *Salaam* is a part. *As-Salaam* is the whole.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Right. Very good it is beautiful. I'd like to go to Brother Imam Yahya Abdullah and for any statements or questions that he might have.

**Imam Abdullah:** Yes, I'd like to ask: Is it in the teachings of Al-Islam that is attractive in what are some of the tenets and beliefs of the Muslims?

**Imam Muhammad:** I think what appeals to the people I described, those unestablished masses---that is what I meant when I was just referring to earlier, “the masses” the unestablished masses---it appeal to the unestablished masses is understood in its religious simplicity, the simpleness, the simplicity of the language. The religion we have, it does not put a lot of importance on mysticism, on ritualism. It requires that, and accepts the continuation and continuity of life, that life is continuous and life is one. It is one; it is united.

Eventually, we are going to have to deal with that oneness. So the oneness---the first principle in our religion is the oneness of G’d, the oneness of his creation, the oneness of the human life. If we are not aware of that, then eventually we are going to run into problems because one day, we are going to have to live together. One day we are going to have to deal with each other. I like what we introduced in the beginning of the show on the screen that says, from the quote in the Quran, a quote in our holy book. It says, "And G’d have made you tribes that you should know each other and not despise each other." That is G’d's mercy to us.

He is saying, "I do not want you to run into a collision down the road. You are a small crowd now, you have your island but that is not the way it is going to stay. You are going to multiply and other people are going to multiply. You are going to meet each other soon. You are going to have to deal with these differences in the races." Our religion has an appeal because right away it rejects it outright. Prophet Muhammad, when he was told to introduce himself to the Arabs---he was an Arab, born in Arabia and speaking to Arabs ---he was not told to tell the people I'm an Arab. G’d said to him, "Tell the people ‘I am a human being like you are, a mortal human like you’. "

There is a key for understanding how we are to think in terms of racial identity and nationalism that really what is important for us more than anything, although man has to grow from his human identity to tribal, national identity, et cetera, we are entitled to our separate cultures. Racism has nothing to do with culture. We can be human race and have different cultures but we shouldn't be racist in the racist sense.

I love to see Irish people, nice Irish community. I love to see Italians enjoying a nice Italian community. I love to see African-Americans enjoying the personality, the African life, and the African-American life, and the African-American personality. We want to keep that cultural identity and that cultural mold and the spiritual sensitivities to that. We want to keep all of that but what's more important for us if we expect to live on this earth and enjoy peace and be able to progress as a people, we have to recognize that G’d has made us essentially one people. Our nature is the same, our natural possibilities for that nature are the same. They are no different.

Some people, because of heart of effort, greater effort, or because of environmental pressure on them, they are forced to do great things. We look at them and say, "Look at how the Japanese are going with industrialization." But our religion tells us that we all have the same potential for that industrialization. But G’d just have favored some with the environmental situation that brings it out, or some other condition that have brought that out. It is important for us never to become racist in the racist sense.

What I would caution Blacks on this race, this humanitarianism off, the planet into some dreams, into some dream world, some dream life. We have to accept that people do place great value on their own cultural history and their own cultural unity. And we should not try to impose or try to force ourselves on that. We should value that and respect that in all people and we should be building our own personality and our own ethnic character; we should be building that ourselves. We should care enough about that to try to contain that and try to build it up better and progress it.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Brother Imam, I noticed that for a long time there has been a problem for identity. We have what I heard you term once as an identity crisis.

**Imam Muhammad:** Yes writers in the field of human sciences, even some who have preachers, they have written on that. I read books on the seriousness of identity crisis in the Black society in Black America. And I do recognize that is a serious problem. I think our movement really is a growth out of that effort to solve the identity problem for Blacks. Marcus Garvey, the Nation of Islam, the Temple of Islam as it was called our Nation of Islam, these movements were mainly formed to try to resolve that racial identity problem.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** You came with a term that many people are--

**Imam Muhammad:** I know, it is because Bilal is looked at as this Bilal, the one who called the people to prayer, Prophet Muhammad picked this African man, a man of Africa. Prophet Muhammad chose him upon suggestions of few others; one of the Khaliphs and another person, a second person and the prophet saw the same, like a vision of Bilal calling to prayer. So he was given that post or office of the muezzin which means the one who calls the people to prayer. We have five daily prayers and every prayer is preceded by a call, an event that's given in rhythmic as you know a rhythmic call, and a very beautiful rhythmic call. He was the one chosen for that.

And I think the Muslim world, the Arabs, the Pakistanis, the Egyptians, the Muslims of the world, and the immigrants here, when they heard us calling ourselves Bilalians, I think they thought because we came from a confused concept of our religion under the temple of Islam or under the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the late leader Elijah Muhammad, I think they thought we were trying to introduce a sect, a new sect but actually, we wanted to identify with him as a religious figure. We were identifying more with him as a Black person whose situation in Arabia is much like our situation in this country a hundred years ago.

He was a slave in Arabia and we were a slave here in America. He came to the knowledge of Islam and his life improved and he was given great statute, great station, because of him embracing the religion Islam or Al-Islam. We came into Al-Islam, too, from a slave background, from a slave past and we have gained the same feeling of comfort, a feeling of pride, but for us, it is fulfillment. It fulfills something in our lives when we call ourselves Bilalians but we understand. When we address in the public or other people who do not belong to our religion, in our experience, who do not know about our experience, we call ourselves African Americans, Blacks.

I don't like using terms like Black and White to identify people that much. I think these are the weakest terms that we have; the weakest of all the terms we have to identify ourselves with or by “White” and “Black”. They do nott say much of that at all. When White people talk to each other, you think they say, "Hey, White man, come here." If they don't know the fellow they want to talk with, then, if he recognize him as Italian, they say, "Italian fellow, Italian." But we cannot say, "I am talking about the African fellow." We say, "I'm talking to that Black fellow."

Really, the burden of Black and White is terrible. And I try to stay away from that language as much as possible. I like to refer to us the Blacks of America, as African-American. After all, we don't have the same degree of blackness, do we? We are a Ralph Bunche was a long way from jet....

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Identification for a human being. Color period.

**Imam Muhammad:** Certainly, it is. I think the important identity for us is Muslim. We are Muslim. I remember my father, the late leader, he gave us a catechism. He asked a question. He says, "Who is your own self?" He gives the answer to you to learn. "My own self is a righteous Muslim."

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** I remember that.

**Imam Muhammad:** He did not say, "My own self is an African." He did not say, "My own self is a Black man." The answer is, "My own self is a righteous Muslim." G’d's word is what makes us what we are. G’d treated us naturally but then we need help later because we go away from the nature. G’d's word makes us what we are so the religion comes into us and that's more important as the identity for us. We are Muslims and Muslims keep us in line with the best of our nature. Muslims keeps us in line with the best intellectual possibility. If we understand the religion, it will keep us in line with the best that is in us and the best that is before us. So that is the best identity to call myself a Muslim.

Now, for the purpose of identifying myself in that setting, I'll say I'm an American. In an ethnic setting, I have to say I'm African-American, or I'm Black. Maybe one day all of us will say, "I'm Bilalian."

**Imam Farahkhan:** I have got a question; it is so inspiring when you broke down Bilal. After that real small mission group and we have been a member of the community for some time, we see our mission growing. Where are we going from here? Where is the mission headed?

**Imam Muhammad:** I like to think that Bilal, his role in the building of the religious community under Prophet Muhammad, as a caller of the prayer, caller to worship. I would like to feel that it is prophetic and that actually now we are fulfilling something that is for the future. Here, Black people in America come from similar circumstances that he suffered as an individual. Here, we are now saying that we represent the American Muslim Mission, the *Da'wah*. After all, mission to us is *Da'wah*. It means to call people to the faith.

We are representing that call, that *Da'wah*, that call people to the faith. I would like to think that is prophetic, that his life pointed to this, that in the future this would happen. I do not see him in his own individual life as having a mission as such but I see him and his symbol, what he represents, pointing to the future that people like him, from his circumstances, from his bad circumstances, will call people. And it will not just be a muezzin placed in the minaret or near the masjid to call people to that one masjid but a group of people that will call the conscience of the people back to the correct worship and the correct respect for humanity.

**Imam Farahkhan:** Beautiful.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** Brother Imam, it always disturbs me to have to stop you. This time runs out so fast.

**Imam Muhammad:** I hate to take up so much time, too.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** No.

**Imam Muhammad:** You should tell me if I am taking up too much time.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** I would like to bring out one point that I think is very important. Many people know what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was teaching during the Nation of Islam. It was sort of a Black supremacist teaching, a racist teaching. It was used as an antidote for White supremacy, because all of us came under that and slavery. He was not teaching the true concept of Al-Islam, although he did much good and many good things came out of it. But-

**Imam Muhammad:** He was dealing with the problem of oppression, racial oppression, more than anything else and the neglect of the Black man, neglecting the Black man's life because of that discrimination.

**Imam Kamalud-Din:** The thing that I was trying to really bring out was the fact that you are his son and many people do not know that. But it was you on the straight path of Al-Islam. I think it is very important that people understand that. Also, I would like to say that I hope that you have gained some good information and understanding concerning our religion and concerning the Muslim life. Our program is not so much for proselytizing, but is to give you information so you can better understand us, and we will better understand you.

I'd like to say *As-salaamu alaykum* may the peace and blessings of Almighty G’d be upon you. We will see you on our next program.